

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

DISTRICT 7

DIVISION OF ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING

100 MAIN STREET, SUITE 100

LOS ANGELES, CA 90012-3606

PHONE (213) 897-0703

FAX (213) 897-9572

TTY (213) 897-4937

*Flex your power!
Be energy efficient!*

**Ventura State Route 118
Wildlife Corridor Multi-Agency Working Group Member Meeting
September 6, 2006 – 1:00 p.m. to 2:30 p.m.
Simi Valley Chamber of Commerce
40 W. Cochran St., Suite 100, Simi Valley, CA 93065**

Meeting Summary

I. Introductions and Previous Meeting Summary

The meeting began with introductions by all attendees and Ron Kosinski. All present received a copy of the agenda and a copy of the Draft Action Plan. There were no comments on the previous meeting summary.

II. Grimes Canyon Comment Update/Group Comment Procedure

All group comments were incorporated into a letter to Scott Ellison, Ventura County Planning Division, for the Grimes Canyon Mining Project. Ron indicated that the Caltrans Inter Governmental Review (IGR) Department also provided comments that were related to traffic safety, congestion, and funding. The group suggested that future IGR comment letters reference any Working Group comments as well. Ron has spoken to IGR to keep the Environmental Department involved in the commenting process. He will follow that up with a formal request to IGR.

III. Action Plan: Review and Approve Background and Context Sections

Caltrans presented the first draft of the Working Group's Action Plan. The first two sections mainly discuss the background and the need for action. The context of our chosen location is highlighted with South Coast Wildlands data and other relevant research.

IV. Action Plan: Group Decision for Proposed Actions for Wildlife Corridor Improvements

We continued filling in section three, "Proposed Action/Wildlife Corridor Improvements". The group brought up the following points:

- Focal species should be as inclusive as possible, but focusing on those that are impacted by roads.
- Not all species will use the same type of crossing. There will be some mixing, but variety in structure design suits more species.
- Possible use of existing structures to accommodate smaller animals.
- The plan needs to identify land use conflicts in our planning area.
- The group should make recommendations for changes to conflicting policies related to corridors.
- The railroad should be brought in if the plan foresees coordination with their facility. Metrolink or VCTC may be able to represent the railroad.

"Caltrans improves mobility across California"

Please see Attachment A for additional changes to the Action Plan on 9/6/2006. We stopped at section four, "Implementation". Caltrans will continue filling this out a little further with discussion from today's meeting. However, please send in your revisions as well. This will help free up some time in the next meeting in October.

V. Update for Related Area Projects

- Liz Chatten gave a presentation to the Ventura County Roads Department to go over funding with respect to SCAG, Caltrans, and VCTC. SCAG has two billion dollars in discretionary funds for distribution to local agencies. Projects could be more eligible to receive part of the bond funds if they are incorporating advanced mitigation. We should work with the Roads Department to determine any local roads that are an issue for wildlife movement. The Ventura County General Plan also identifies wildlife migration corridors as a significant biological resource that is to be preserved and protected. The County is developing mitigation guidelines and may look into an in-lieu or other fund-related program.
- Mike Ritchey with Parsons brought a printout of the 2005 aerial GIS data he has been working on. He needs to work out some issues with the imagery. South Coast Wildlands has already done this and Parsons could contract with them to save time and work. Parsons is also incorporating the latest SCAG land use data. Mike should have a finished map and an overview of the geodatabase for the October meeting.
- John Haynes with the Caltrans Headquarters unit gave an overview of the Transportation Enhancement (TE) grant process. It exactly follows the 2-year State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) cycle. The application cycle is continuous for Caltrans. There is also a 75/25 % split with MPO/Caltrans shares. The 25 % has also come out as 10 to 15 % in years past. We should plan as early as possible because projects are programmed 3 to 5 years out.

There are some key differences in the interregional and regional funds. The interregional is the State's share, usually in more rural areas while the regional share is usually urban. Regional monies are programmed as a lump sum reserve in designated years, and then the projects are identified. Projects can change once they are identified, however once they are fully programmed for a particular year, it has to be bid that year or the money is lost. Extensions are sometimes possible, but it is very difficult to get this approved by the CTC. Retrofits, upgrades, etc. should be performed under the regional program while new projects would more likely fit with a State Highway Operations Project Program (SHOPP) project.

VI. Action Items

- Group members should fill in the Action Plan and forward responses to Kally_Mccormick@dot.ca.gov
Try to send in responses by October 10, 2006.
- Caltrans will send a letter to IGR to help get our comments referenced in their comment letters.
- Caltrans will follow up with Parsons for GIS work.

VII. Future Meeting

October 17, 2006 1:00 – 2:30

Simi Valley Chamber of Commerce, 40 W. Cochran St., Suite 100, Simi Valley, CA 93065

Now available! The new Caltrans Wildlife Corridor Database:
<http://www.dot.ca.gov/dist07/divisions/oep/118corr/index.php>

Attachment A

Draft Outline for Ventura State Route 118 Wildlife Corridor Working Group Plan



1. Background of Area, Issue, and Need for Proposed Plan

State Route 118 has been identified as a major barrier for wildlife and species movement between the Santa Monica and Sierra Madre mountains. Highways and other urban uses can act as barriers to movement which can disrupt basic ecological functions and can also pose safety concerns for wildlife and the public.

In November 2004, the Ventura State Route 118 Wildlife Corridor Working Group was established to foster cooperation and coordination between regulatory agencies and organizations to help preserve and restore connectivity in this area. This group has worked to generate information on connectivity and wildlife movement in the vicinity of State Route 118 between State Route 23 and State Route 27. The group has also set goals and objectives which this plan hopes to address.

This plan will focus on the local wildlife movement adjacent to State Route 118 and the proposed improvements and implementation needed to enhance and improve connectivity. It will also help coordinate efforts between the different group members jurisdictions and organizations in order to better address impacts to this regional resource. It is also our hope that this plan will facilitate incorporating environmental resource considerations in regional planning by Caltrans, Ventura County Transportation Commission, Southern California Association of Governments, cities, and counties per SAFETEA-LU.

2. Discussion of Local Wildlife Movement and Corridor Context

The Santa Monica-Sierra Madre Connection is one of the few coastal to inland connections remaining in the South Coast Ecoregion, stretching from the rugged Santa Monica Mountains at the coast to the gently sloping Simi Hills, and on to the jagged peaks of the Santa Susana Mountains and the Sierra Madre Ranges of Los Padres National Forest (SCW, 2006). The Santa Monica Mountains to the Santa Susana Mountains connection was specifically identified as one of the top 15 linkages identified in the statewide Missing Linkages effort in 2000 and by South Coast Wildlands. This connection is important for several species including mountain lion, American badger, mule deer, brush rabbit, desert woodrat, Loggerhead shrike, California thrasher, cactus wren, California kingsnake, as well as others.

A study of State Route 118 was conducted in 2003 and 2004 by Caltrans to identify potential linkage locations for wildlife movement. The focal species for this study included mountain lion, mule deer, bobcat, and coyote. Other species occurrence information was also collected. This study identified enhancement improvements, existing linkages, and barriers to movement. Other studies by NPS, SMMC, and South Coast Wildlands have also evaluated the area for wildlife movement at different scales. (Fill in more detail on these studies) These studies have all identified the Alamos Canyon area and the Rocky Peak area as being integral areas for maintaining wildlife connectivity between the Simi Hills and Santa Susana Mountains.

Fill in explanation of different species movement needs in the context of this area.

3. Proposed Action/Wildlife Corridor Improvements

- a. Focal Species Identification
 - i. Mountain lion
 - ii. Mule deer

"Caltrans improves mobility across California"

- iii. Bobcat
 - iv. Coyote
 - v. Badgers
 - vi. Western toad- terrestrial needs
 - vii. Desert woodrat
- b. Discussion of Connectivity Requirements
 - i. Structure requirements
 - 1. Mountain lion
 - ii. Habitat Corridor Preferences/Needs
 - 1. Mountain lion
- c. Identify appropriate locations (existing or new)
- d. Identify Land Use Planning Conflicts and Opportunities
 - i. Current Ownership and Use
 - ii. Existing Zoning and General Plan
 - iii. Proposed Projects
 - iv. Existing and Proposed Conservation Efforts
 - v. Identify Desirable Policy Revisions
- e. Identify any limiting factors associated with cost or regulatory requirements
- f. Identify Priority Improvements
 - i. Alamos Canyon Corridor
 - 1. structural improvements
 - 2. land acquisition or dedications
 - 3. landscape restoration or enhancements
 - 4. maintenance and monitoring
 - ii. Rocky Peak Corridor
 - 1. structural improvements
 - 2. land acquisition or dedications
 - 3. landscape restoration or enhancements
 - 4. maintenance and monitoring

4. Implementation

- a. Identify overlapping conservation efforts
- b. Define timing/phasing of proposed actions
- c. Identify roles and responsibilities for implementation of involved parties
- d. Determine Costs associated with proposed actions
- e. Develop solutions or alternatives for any limiting factors based on cost, land use implications, or other regulatory limitations
- f. Identify funding possibilities and responsible parties for securing the funds
- g. Monitoring of proposed actions
- h. Build in maintenance costs and labor for proposed actions and assign the responsibility for maintenance actions.